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ABSTRACT

A forum focused on ways to implement the School-to-Work Opportunities Act, which requires work-based learning, school-based learning, and activities which connect the two. Participants described the act as follows: (1) a great step forward and based upon enduring principles, (2) a collaborative career education system supported by industry-education councils, and (3) a kindergarten-through-university continuum. School administration must believe in preparing students for employment. School-to-work efforts must include connections of learning to the world of work. The Act offers a good basis for making a major career choice in the future, but the requirement for selecting a career major no later than grade 11 should be modified and instead specify selecting a career for exploration. The Act requires a comprehensive program of career awareness form elementary school to secondary school to postsecondary education to employment. Flexibility is required of both employers and schools. Other suggestions are as follows: relating all education to the world of work as the logical next step; establishing collaborative relationships among teachers, counselors, and community leaders; schools, businesses, and community agencies working together in partnership; making education the key; and effective leadership nationally and locally to model working with others. (YLB)

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AACE FORUM

SOLUTIONS

THE SCHOOL-TO-WORK OPPORTUNITIES ACT

The School-to-Work Opportunities Act requires work-based learning, school-based learning, and activities which connect the two. Students are asked to select career majors no later than the eleventh grade, and undertake a planned program of job training and work experience. There are other requirements. What will it take to make this effort to connect school and employment work?

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Pat Nellor Wickwire

The ideas behind career education are old. More in *Utopia* (1516) proposes that every citizen be taught the common methods of agriculture and at least one handicraft. In *Gargantua* (1539), Rabelais, intending to form an individual guided by independent reason, writes of the training of youth:

> They went likewise to see the drawing of metals or the casting of great ordnance, how the lapidaries did work, and also the gold-smiths and cutters of precious stones; nor did they omit to visit the alchemists, money-coiners, upholsterers, weavers, velvet-workers, watch-makers, looking-glass framers, printers, organ builders and other such kind of artificers, and everywhere giving them somewhat to think, did learn and consider the industry and invention of the trades.

And Andrea (*Christianopolis*, 1619) describes a universal system of education with part of each day "devoted to manual training and domestic art and science as each one's occupation is assigned according to his natural inclination." Similar proposals are found in Bacon, Descartes, Comenius, and Leibnitz. Whatever else career education may be, a fad invented in 1970 it is not.

Datta, L. (1976). Introduction. In *Monographs on Career Education* (p. 1). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.

Presented to *AACE FORUM: SOLUTIONS* by Barbara Brush.

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PN Wickwire

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. . . a great step forward . . . based upon enduring principles . . . .

First of all, I believe that the School-to-Work Opportunities Act is a great step forward which will be successful because it is so firmly grounded and based upon enduring principles.

From all I have read and pondered, I am convinced that it will take the direction of business education teachers with actual work experience in the business world. This would not include education graduates who have had summer jobs as lifeguards, playground instructors, librarians, social service center counselors, and coaches in various sports. Some of this background is valuable to a future teacher, but if it were the exclusive basis for hiring a workplace coordinator or an education coordinator, it would be very limiting.

Many of our colleges eliminated the program entitled "business education teacher" in the '60s and the '70s, but I am sure this has been reinvented as business technology teacher; these people, working with the guidance department, would provide the catalyst.

On a personal note, please keep in mind the very deep love and respect I have for people who are first and foremost educators. I have often noticed the long and impressive credentials of all of the authors who have developed the materials used in the career education field . . . .

==Barbara Brush

. . . a collaborative career education system supported by industry-education councils . . . .

The School-to-Work Opportunities Act (STWOA) represents a series of programs that are needed and useful but fall short in creating a successful comprehensive collaborative school-to-employment system. The architects of the STWOA ignored the extensive research, demonstration projects, and systemwide implementation of a career education *process* beginning in the primary grades. Career education is the cornerstone of workforce preparation--a broad educational process in which students at all levels receive relevant information and experiences designed to prepare them for work.

The career education school-based model, in contrast to the STWOA, put educators and the employment community *on the same page* in terms of the framework for developing a school-to-employment system, that is, career awareness in elementary school, career exploration in the middle/junior high school, and career decision making beginning in the tenth grade. Those of us involved in the career education movement of the '70s and '80s had excellent resources for conducting staff development programs, infusion of career education concepts into the total curriculum, school-based job placement, career resource centers, occupational information systems, and employability skills training. Job training and work experience were provided for in the career education experiential model. Industry-education councils served as the formal collaborative infrastructure connecting school and the workplace.

Industry-education councils have been the proven collaborative mechanism over the past three decades to foster substantive improvement in academic and vocational education and workforce preparation.

The STWOA relies on "business-education partnerships" which are similar to a typical project advisory committee that focuses for the most part on short-term student-oriented projects. Integrating the programs of the STWOA into a collaborative career education system supported by industry-education councils would be the logical course of action to follow at this time. Ignoring career education negates an opportunity to establish a comprehensive school-to-employment system.

==Donald M. Clark

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. . . a kindergarten-through-university continuum . . . .

Career preparation education in California is a kindergarten-through-university continuum of well-planned, articulated, integrated, and sequential activity-based programs. It is concerned with the processes, materials, and systems of technology and their development, use, and importance. It is concerned with industry--its organization, processes, resources, systems, and products. It is concerned with the socioeconomic and environmental influences of industry and technology. Career preparation education programs help all students to understand their technological culture, enabling them to make rational decisions about their lives and provide a positive contribution in the increasingly technological workplace.

Programs reflect the influence of popular concepts, such as linking classroom with workplace learning to increase the relevancy for students. Four delivery systems offer high potential for promoting this linkage and relevancy: magnet school, academy, technical preparation (Tech Prep), and apprenticeship programs.

Few educators are more aware of the importance of teaching workplace know-how than those in agriculture, business, health careers, home economics, and industrial and technology education. These programs can become high-performance centers for training by incorporating foundation skills into the curriculum. Reading, writing, mathematics, and science are currently being woven into these career preparation education studies to enable students to achieve workplace competencies.

Because of the need to teach foundation skills, critical thinking, and interpersonal skills, career preparation education is progressively becoming a team-teaching effort. Teachers from other disciplines work side by side to reinforce the relevance of academics by demonstrating how they apply to the high-performance workplace. When a student understands the job that needs to be done in allocating resources of time, money, materials, personnel, and information, the student is learning in the context of application. Career preparation education demonstrates how the productive use of resources, interpersonal skills, information systems, and technology is necessary to achieve excellence in business and industry. The link between school and work becomes clear to everyone involved.

Students who complete the meaningful sequence of strong career preparation education courses are realistically prepared for a meaningful, productive life. They have clear career goals and move on to postsecondary education, advanced training, or full-time employment. They understand that they will need to continue their education throughout their lives, and that, although what they know may be important today, they will succeed in the workforce only through what they can learn and do in the future.

Work is an important part of everyone's life. Whether that work is meaningful, satisfying, and gratifying or "just a job" is the difference between a fulfilling life and one that is routine. Career preparation education prepares people for life and for worthwhile work in a world that needs their best efforts. This preparation is provided within the context of a learning continuum wherein a student will be able to plan intelligently and properly for a career goal.

==Richard Dahl

. . . believe in preparing students for employment . . . .

School administration must *believe in preparing students for employment*. So often the focus in education is preparing students for college without emphasizing that the purpose of college is employment. Therefore, education must understand and participate with and in the labor market and the world of work in order to prepare students for real life. Educators need training and out-of-the-classroom work experience in order to convey the important message to our youth: Employment and learning are lifelong.

==Cynthia Dowdy

. . . connections of learning to the world of work . . . .

School-to-work efforts must be part of integrated and incremental career education programs that include career awareness, exploration, planning, decision making, preparation, and follow through.

Career education is offered throughout the school experience, and begins at the onset of schooling. The experiential learning environments offered in most kindergarten to fifth grade elementary schools provide creative teachers with options for making the connections of learning to the world of work. Teachers, parents, and community members provide instruction that connects curriculum with adult work and supports early pathways for young learners toward productive and rewarding adulthood.

The elementary school staff can use two major resources to guide their efforts in developing a strong, well-integrated program for the career development of pupils. The first resource, the report of the Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS), is based on what business, public employers, managers, union officials, assembly line workers, researchers, and economists have identified as the competencies that must be exhibited by the American workforce. The SCANS competencies include resource management, positive interpersonal skills, ability to handle information effectively, systems management, and knowledge of technology use. They require a strong foundation in basic skills (reading, writing, arithmetic and mathematics, speaking, and listening); thinking skills (thinking creatively, making decisions, and solving problems); and personal qualities (individual responsibility, self-esteem, sociability, self-management, and integrity). Some of these competencies and foundation skills are integrated into elementary school curriculum and instruction. When work and learning connections are explicitly made, the young learner has a chance to practice work behaviors during very influential years.

The second major resource is career development curriculum that is integrated into all elementary subject areas. Most curriculum design recommendations include attitude development, basic skills, self-awareness, educational awareness and exploration, career planning and decision making, and career preparation. Learning activities which support these recommendations and the SCANS competencies and foundation skills are conducted through infusion, and with incremental reinforcement and expansion throughout schooling.

Beginning in kindergarten, teachers must construct an environment that replicates as much as possible the one in which these students will be asked to perform and produce as knowledge workers. Students need to assess situations, make personal and professional decisions regarding their jobs and careers, possess capacity for understanding and caring for others, demonstrate effective communication

skills, know how to respond constructively to differences and to apply nonviolent problem solving skills, be flexible, and have a sense of humor.

With everyone--parents, community members, teachers, and others--involved in the career education of elementary students, the students will be assured a positive start toward a productive personal and work life. With appropriate career education throughout the school years, students will be prepared to create success with the work-based learning, school-based learning, and connecting activities specified by the School-to-Work Opportunities Act.

==Patricia S. DuVall

. . . a good basis for making a major career choice in the future . . . .

In my opinion, the School-to-Work Opportunities Act (STWOA) will help only a limited number of students until the requirement for selecting a career major no later than the eleventh grade is modified. The Act should suggest selecting a career for exploration, not for specific training. The average age of most students in the eleventh grade is 15 to 16 years, not educated or experienced enough to make important career decisions. However, a connecting bridge between work-based learning and school-based learning, as supplied by the Act, can give the students a good basis for making a major career choice in the future by providing a general education in job training and work experience in the present. I base my objection to selecting a career by grade 11 on my own experience of talking to many young people, as a career/leisure/life planning counselor, and on the experiences related to me by professional educators.

For 28 years young people, mostly in the 25-35 age range, have called me from all over the United States, saying they wished to change their careers "before it's too late" (their words). All of their stories are very similar. After 8 to 10 years of employment in the fields they prepared for or in miscellaneous jobs, these young people fear middle age will find them locked into careers they do not wish to continue, or still floating. Despite the years of predictions by career and labor authorities that workers may have five to seven different careers before they retire, my callers are surprised to hear it. They seem unprepared for a job search, unless they have seen a career-help book, such as Richard Bolles' *What Color Is My Parachute?*

How did this lack of job knowledge come about? Here are two diverse examples: A high school teacher in a farming community was handed the paperwork to conduct a career preparedness course for tenth graders. She reports that her students and those of the other teachers in her school have no interest in learning about careers at ages 14-15. They are completely wrapped up in their personal lives and give little thought to the future. The teachers agree that most students in their area are still too young and one-sided in experience (farming) to make practical career decisions by grade 11. A modified School-to-Work program might raise their career consciousness.

Another teacher, in a completely different setting, the head of the counseling department in a large urban university, tells of the terrible struggle many of the students at ages 19-20 have in selecting academic majors by their sophomore year, a requirement for undergraduates. Yet these students have been exposed to multiple careers all of their lives. They could benefit from general career information offered in high school by STWOA.

Now back to my original statement about modifying the Act requirement that students should select a career major no later than grade 11. As the Act was signed only 2 years ago, there has been no time to prove that career selection at grade 11 will set students on correct career paths. I believe the Act's administrators should start a longitudinal research project with a group of students who are making their selections now, and follow them through age 30.

The research project should note the size of the community the students were living in when they made their first decision, the main types of work followed in that community, the degree of

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education of the people who raised them, their personal amounts of motivation and interest in work, their leisure interests, their past academic records, and other pertinent information. The project should note at what points in their work lives the young people have doubts about their career decisions, if these doubts occur; it should have an intervention method in place to assist those who need to move in another direction. At the end of this approximate 15-year period, the Act's administrators should be in a position to decide how useful the Act is and how it could be changed. Will there still be STWOA by then?

I think that the School-to-Work Opportunity Act as it stands is a blanket program that does not leave room for students' individual characteristics. It should exchange the requirement for an eleventh grade career decision to an eleventh grade choice of a career subject to explore. The students should be helped to make their career exploration selections, and be told that the subjects they select are not expected to be final career choices. However, the rest of the program presented in the Act will give them valuable experience for making more lasting career decisions later in their lives. The world of work will not be a shock to them when they have to face it.

==Patsy B. Edwards

. . . from secondary school to postsecondary education to employment . . . .

First, it is going to require a very comprehensive program of career awareness, beginning no later than the early elementary school years. Career awareness, under this act, is going to have to take into account the rapidly changing nature of the occupational society in the United States and in the international marketplace. Helping students realize the implications of moving from an industrial to a postindustrial information-based high-technology occupational society is going to be a major challenge that must be met. Beginning even in the early elementary grades, the increasingly close relationships between education and work need to be emphasized with all students.

Second, if this is to work, we must emphasize the classroom as a workplace, and both pupils and teachers as workers. Unless we do that, there is no way in which this program will work.

Third, to implement a successful school-to-work opportunities effort, it will be absolutely essential, it seems to me, to recognize the need for some form of postsecondary education on the part of almost all secondary school leavers. The days when a student could appropriately ask, "Should I go to college or should I go to work?" are past. Today's question is "Should I go to a 4-year college, or should I seek some other form of postsecondary education prior to seeking entry in the primary labor market?" Until, and unless, we are willing to recognize and emphasize this fact, there is no way of meeting the goals of the School-to-Work Opportunities Act. The transition needed today is from secondary school to postsecondary education of some kind to employment--not from secondary school to employment. Those who use the "secondary school to employment" are almost certain to find most of the students winding up in the secondary labor market, rather than the primary labor market. When students do that, they don't choose careers, they settle for jobs. That's not good enough.

==Kenneth B. Hoyt

. . . flexibility is required . . . .

Flexibility is required on the parts of both employers and the schools, to allow for changing conditions, and to provide for the morale and well-being of the students.

==Allen A. Johnson

. . . relating all education to the world of work is the logical next step . . . .

The School-to-Work initiatives and mandates, if implemented with thought and planning, can have a dramatic effect on student achievement. Relating all education to the world of work is the logical next step in integration. A focus on a particular career is the matrix that binds academic and technical education.

One successful model of academic and technical integration plus worksite experience is health occupations programs. These programs are definitely career-oriented, incorporate a strong academic component, and teach specific skills which are practiced *on the job*. Clinical experience is a well-developed, well-documented aspect of the health occupations curriculum. It is characterized by:

1. Mastery of rigorous didactic information.
2. Clearly defined goals and objectives.
3. Adherence to regulatory agency standards.
4. Documentation of structured clinical activities.
5. Establishment of continuity by pre- and post-clinical conferences.
6. Supervision by qualified instructors and/or facility staff.
7. Evaluation according to competency-based standards.

This is just one type of work experience that is already in place. There are other models that are also well-established. Now we need to develop quality methods of integrating work experience for the majority of students who do not have this advantage. It will take a concerted effort on the parts of both educators and employers to make this happen.

==Kathleen Krizner

. . . collaborative relationships must be established . . . .

I believe that, in order for this effort to connect school and employment to be effective, collaborative relationships must be established among teachers, counselors, and community leaders. It is critical that we begin working together to provide the types of opportunities for students that will allow them to try out or experiment with various careers of interest. Counselors should take the lead in this effort by inviting teachers and local business leaders to join a school-to-work opportunities task force. Members of such a task force would be primarily responsible for creating opportunities within the community for students to engage in a planned program of job training and work experience. Of course, the ultimate effectiveness of any effort in this domain will depend on the degree to which teachers, counselors, and community leaders are committed to establishing strong working relationships between schools and the working community.

==Darrell A. Luzzo

. . . only if schools, businesses, community agencies work together in partnership . . . .

The following conditions will help to ensure that connecting school to work will be successful:

1. Working with students will be successful only if schools, businesses, and community agencies work together in partnership.
2. Implementation of comprehensive competency-based guidance in all schools is essential.
3. The components of a comprehensive guidance program and the guidance curriculum, which includes K-12 specified outcomes, should be utilized as the focal point for school and community activities.
4. Every student must have a career/educational planning portfolio, for documentation, which starts no later than grade 7 and follows the student through graduation.
5. Recognizing that the emerging role of the school counselor involves working directly with students as well as managing community resources and programs is basic.
6. In the process of completing career awareness and exploration activities, ensure that students are not "tracked." Students must be encouraged to keep their options open while enrolling in the most rigorous course of studies commensurate with their interests and abilities.

==Stan Maliszewski

. . . education is the key . . . .

Willing and able bodies? Profoundly simple. For school-to-work to succeed, we need people willing and able to make the notion succeed. This may prove an insurmountable mountain of a task.

Why? Because in our state and in the federal school-to-work legislation we adopted a European- and Japanese-based model. Our cultures differ immensely. For example, teen years have historically been the years of exploration and frolic here, not career commitment. Eli Ginzberg said that career interests do not stabilize until about age 25 in this country. Yet we now expect 16-year-olds to make meaningful career major selections in order to undertake an integrated training program for their last two years of high school--a major cultural shift.

Additionally, we ask teachers to teach these classes, yet we provide few resources for professional development and retraining of teachers who have taught a much narrower curricular area for most of their work history. In Oregon, we expect teachers to transform the content and manner in which they conduct education, and give them less money than they had before school reform legislation--in some cases 25% less!

Finally, we ask parents and business to buy the notion and help make schools successful. From what I have witnessed, businesses see the payoffs more readily than parents. Business has lots to gain from school reform practices that put kids in the workplace at little or no charge. Eleventh graders at Centennial High in Multnomah County, Oregon, work in industry for an intensive week. Their goal is to identify an efficiency improvement and structure the solution for business. These students have suggested improvements saving thousands of dollars for Oregon industry.

Parents feel comfortable with the three Rs. I can't count the times I have heard adults say, "The three Rs worked for me, and my generation could perform basic math without calculators and spell correctly without spellcheckers when we finished school." Parents must appreciate school-to-work-style education, or they will move their children to private schools where the students follow traditional standards. The public schools need parents to keep kids in the public schools. Entire cities deteriorate when public schools lose students to private schools.

Work-based learning may or may not be valuable, depending upon the environment and quality of the instructor/supervisor. It takes time and money to assure quality worksites for learning. Most business people do not have the training expertise that teachers have.

However, most people want prosperity, employment opportunities, and safe communities. I am not convinced that school-to-work is the answer to these aspirations in America. Perhaps it is, but we have cultural mountains to move to succeed--with both youth and parental values sitting like boulders in the foothills. We also need money. Why voters don't see that education is the key to economic development, high-skill employment, and safe communities is beyond me. Maybe we need to spend some federal money educating the populace on what's right in education.

==Susan Roudebush

. . . effective leadership nationally and locally to model working with others . . . .

At the macro level: We need effective leadership nationally and locally to model working with others. Someone has to lead the charge for others to follow. To prevent each locality from "starting at start" there have to be clearinghouses to coordinate and link grassroots action. This could take place on a statewide level. Participants need to document how they managed to overcome issues of ego, territoriality, and status to form workable partnerships. This will give others models to follow and adapt. Frequent communication has to occur. This would include but not be limited to the results of efforts, what's working, an inventory of resources, contact people, how to access other groups, networking opportunities, articles, newsletters, publications, and forums to share ideas, resources, problem-solve, and receive training.

At the micro level: Building on the initiatives identified above, local grassroots action could be mobilized. If working with others is not made a priority, meaning it's not something educators and business people are evaluated on or see as part of their strategic objectives, then it's not likely much effort will be put into forming effective partnerships. Working in partnership, schools and businesses can mandate internships for all students and define the criteria by which the internships will be evaluated. Educators and businesses can participate in roundtable discussions to identify and analyze the gap between entry level workers and job demands. Curriculum can then be revised. Students who participate in internships will evaluate the effectiveness of the internships in preparing them for the world of work. Periodic career development activities will be linked to classroom activities and internships. All of this information will be shared with all of the partners of school-to-work and used to fine-tune programs.

Educators will learn about business and business people will learn about education. Serious consideration will be given to revising the school year. Going to school from September-June is an anachronism in a post-agrarian and information-based economy. Computers will be in all classrooms, and students will receive hands-on training from both educators and business people.

To maintain and then accelerate current efforts to connect school and employment, educators, business people, and students will require training in working together collaboratively, team building, comunicating effectively, self-leadership, conflict resolution, and working with people from diverse backgrounds and skills.

==Jo-Ann Vega

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